



# Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

UK Section Limited Company number 14007981

52-54 Featherstone Street London EC1Y 8RT

020 7250 1968 | [ukwilpf.peace@gmail.com](mailto:ukwilpf.peace@gmail.com) | [www.wilpf.org.uk](http://www.wilpf.org.uk)

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Consultative  
Status with  
United Nations  
ECOSOC,  
UNCTAD and  
UNESCO

Special  
Consultative  
Relations  
with FAO,  
ILO and  
UNICEF

14 October 2024

Dear Prime Minister

## Support French initiative – stop all arms sales to Israel

We refer you to our letter to the previous Prime Minister dated 10 November 2023.<sup>1</sup>

In that letter we alerted him to the fact that Articles 5 and 6 of the Arms Trade Treaty would prohibit further sale of arms to Israel. While the new Foreign Secretary has halted around 30 arms export licences to Israel, vital components of F35 fighter jets are used for bombing campaigns, as are unknown components of decision support systems, possibly contributing to use of force by AI systems carrying out collective punishment, such as Gospel and Lavender, making such suspensions a meaningless gesture.

We would remind you that the UK's own laws dictate that arms sales must be suspended if there is a possibility of war crimes being committed. The burden is not on proof but of the lack of confidence. With nearly 50,000 dead, mostly women and children, more aid workers, journalists, medics and civil structures decimated than in history, more density of bombing than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, and warrants for the arrest of political and military leaders including Prime Minister Netanyahu, we have more than crossed that threshold.

In addition, we would remind you that Prime Minister Netanyahu has produced two maps of annexation, one just two weeks before 7 October 2023, at the UNGA. His vision of Israel entirely disappears the Palestinian people, while he quashes any dissent from his own people. We ask then if His Majesty's government is operating with full guidance of the rule of law and human rights for which the Labour Party has always been celebrated in championing.

We also remind you that experts sounded the alarm last year of an onslaught that foretold genocide.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore shocking that, 12 months on, we mark with great sadness a year of horrific violence and innumerable deaths in the Middle East, from the events of 7 October 2023, to the Israeli invasions of Gaza and Lebanon, airstrikes on Yemen and Syria, and missile attacks by Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. These appalling events all stem from years of systematic colonial violence, persecution and imprisonment within the closed confines of Gaza, Hamas responding with the terrible action undertaken on 7 October last year. All this violence, death and destruction must end now, and we urge the UK government to urgently play its part in ending the bloodshed.

The international community has granted Israel decades of impunity since the beginning of its occupation of Palestinian land, and we have seen this continue throughout this last year of escalated violence and forced displacement.

WILPF UK (the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) welcomes the announcement that President Macron of France is now calling for a halt in arms sales to Israel. We have urged HM government in the past to stop all arms sales to Israel and we were very disturbed to learn that British war planes were recently in a combat situation supporting Israel. Providing weapons only ensures that the violence, destruction and humanitarian crisis persist rather than encouraging peace to prevail.

WILPF wholeheartedly supports the Foreign Secretary's call for a ceasefire in the Middle East and your own appeal to return to political solutions. However, continuing to export weapons to Israel is hypocritical, not to mention in violation of our obligations under international law including the Arms Trade Treaty. Please see the attached Joint Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee – a collaboration between WILPF, Al-Haq and the International Service for Human Rights – which focuses on how the UK's arms transfers to Israel are in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in the context of Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza.

We need to support the widespread desire of the British people, as well as the calls of Palestinian and Israeli civilians, to turn peace-building words into the reality of peaceful solutions. Can the UK show support for President Macron's initiative and stop all UK arms sales to Israel in order to realize its call for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon?

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours in peace

Fiona McOwan, National Secretary, for WILPF UK Executive Committee

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP  
Prime Minister  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London SW1A 2AS

<sup>1</sup> Gaza: act NOW to prevent a genocide, letter to UK Prime Minister from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF UK), 10 November 2023. Access at <https://www.wilpf.org.uk/letter-to-the-government-take-action-to-stop-genocide-in-gaza/>

<sup>2</sup> Gaza: UN experts decry bombing of hospitals and schools as crimes against humanity, call for prevention of genocide, 19 October 2023. Access at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/gaza-un-experts-decry-bombing-hospitals-and-schools-crimes-against-humanity>



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Fiona McOwan, National Secretary, for WILPF UK Executive Committee

The Rt Hon John Healey MP  
Secretary of State for Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB

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